

October 10, 2003

Ms. Allison Tepper
Branch Chief
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
Hazard Evaluations and Technical Assistance Branch
4676 Columbia Parkway, Mail Stop R-9
Cincinnati, OH 45226-1988

Dear Ms. Tepper;

The City of Seattle Fire Department is doing an investigation of questions raised about employee health issues at Fire Station 31 and whether these health concerns might be related to the building. Mayor Greg Nickels and I agree that there is nothing more important than the health and safety of those men and women who risk their lives to serve and protect us.

For this reason we have appointed a team of experts in health screening and epidemiology, as well as a representative from Fire Station 31 and a Seattle Fire Department safety officer, to look into these complaints (see attached release).

We would like NIOSH to join in our investigation in any way you feel is appropriate.

Our panel of experts have been asked to conduct a thorough analysis to determine if those who work at the fire station are experiencing an unexpected level of health issues and, if so, why. In addition to the panel, Prezant Associates, Inc., one of the Northwest's preeminent industrial health and safety firms, has been hired to conduct environmental tests of the Station 31 building to determine if there are any environmental issues that need addressing.

To give you some background, in 2001, an industrial health and safety expert inspected and tested the building and an epidemiologist from Seattle-King County Public Health Department recently reviewed eight cases of cancer among current or former firefighters who worked at Station 31. The industrial hygiene study found that the measured pollutant concentrations were all below Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act worker health standards. Similarly, the epidemiological review found that it was very unlikely that the eight cancer cases were related to the building. While those eight cases were all of which the city has direct knowledge, firefighters believe there may be more.

October 10, 2003
Page 2

As you can imagine, the emotional impact of this type of concern is significant, not only among the workers and their families, but also for the Department as a whole and the general public. It is our desire to conduct as thorough a process as possible in order to ensure the health and well being of our Firefighters.

Again, the mayor and I would greatly appreciate your involvement in this matter in any way you deem appropriate – becoming a member of the investigation team or reviewing our findings once the investigation is complete.

Very truly yours,

Gary P. Morris, Fire Chief
Seattle Fire Department

GPM:db